



# Wetland Determinations

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **WHAT IS A WETLAND?**

A wetland is a land area that is saturated with water, either permanently or seasonally, such that it takes on the characteristics of a distinct ecosystem. The primary factor that distinguishes wetlands from other land forms or water bodies is the characteristic vegetation of aquatic plants, adapted to the unique hydric soil. Wetlands play a number of roles in the environment, principally water purification, flood control, carbon sink and shoreline stability. Wetlands are also considered the most biologically diverse of all ecosystems, serving as home to a wide range of plant and animal life. *Wikipedia encyclopedia*

### **WHEN ARE WETLAND DETERMINATIONS REQUIRED?**

Wetland determinations are required when a development proposal:

- A. Is located on or within 125' of a site that has hydric soils as mapped in the Lewis County Soil Survey.
- B. Has been identified as having wetlands on or within 125' of the site per the National Wetlands Inventory.
- C. Has been determined likely to have wetlands after a site inspection.

Lewis County reviews development permit applications and requires wetland determinations if a site meets the previously stated criteria. After the applicant provides a wetland determination report, Lewis County will determine if a project meets the required buffers or if mitigation will be required. For information regarding requirements for mitigation conditions, you may contact the Lewis County Planning Division.

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WETLAND DETERMINATION AND A WETLAND DELINEATION?**

A Wetland Determination is the decision that is made by your wetland consultant after they have completed their inspection and testing (using specific methodology) on the site. They will make the determination whether the site is, or is not, a jurisdictional wetland.

A Wetland Delineation is the mapping of the physical boundaries of a wetland once the determination is made that a jurisdictional wetland exists.

### **WHO IS QUALIFIED TO BE A WETLAND CONSULTANT?**

Wetland determinations will only be accepted from *qualified* professional consultants, having the necessary experience and/or education for identification of wetlands meeting the criteria in the Washington State Wetlands Identification and Delineation Manual (Ecology Publication 96-94), as revised. The County may field-review wetland determinations to verify their accuracy. Any determination found to be inaccurate will not be accepted.

### **HOW DO I FIND A WETLAND CONSULTANT?**

There is no government program for certifying someone as a wetland consultant. Generally, this term means a person with professional experience and comprehensive training in wetland issues. In

Washington State wetland consultants are private contractors or individuals who have the science education or have completed wetland-specific training programs.

Firms or individuals may be found by consulting the yellow pages of your telephone directory under "Environmental Consulting" or by checking with your contractor, friends or family for leads or references. You can also refer to the WA State Department of Ecology website at [www.ecy.wa.gov](http://www.ecy.wa.gov) for information on identifying and hiring a wetland consultant.

### **WHAT INFORMATION AND CONTENT IS REQUIRED IN A WETLAND DETERMINATION?**

If, after a field review, a consultant determines that wetlands are not present, the consultant must submit a report to that effect, describing the methodology pursuant the Washington State Wetlands Identification and Delineation Manual, used to reach that determination (*including data points and a copy of the field data sheet*). If wetlands are found, the following minimum information must be submitted according to the type of project.

#### **Wetland review and reporting requirements**

A wetland assessment study describes the characteristics of the subject property and adjacent areas. The assessment shall be completed pursuant to the information provided in LCC Section 17.35A.621 and include the following:

- (a) Existing physical features of the site including buildings, fences, and other structures, roads, parking lots, utilities, water bodies, etc;
- (b) Determination of the wetland category and standard wetland buffers;
- (c) Field identification and delineation of wetland boundaries. For on-site wetlands, the assessment shall include the dominant and subdominant plant species; soil type, color and texture; sources of hydrology (patterns of surface and subsurface water movement, precipitation, etc), topography, and other pertinent information;
- (d) Identification of sensitive areas and buffers within three hundred (300) feet of the site and an estimate of the existing approximate acreage for each. The assessment of off-site wetlands shall be based on available information and shall not require accessing off-site properties;
- (e) A detailed description of the effects of the proposed development on wetland and buffer function and value, including the area of direct wetland disturbance; area of buffer reduction or averaging including documentation that functions and values will not be adversely affected by the reduction or averaging; effects of storm water management; proposed hydrologic alteration including changes to natural drainage or infiltration patterns; effects on fish and wildlife species and their habitats; clearing and grading impacts; temporary construction impacts; and effects of increased noise, light, or human intrusion; and
- (f) A mitigation plan, if applicable, meeting the requirements noted in 17.35A.622 Wetland mitigation plan.

**Note:** When working with land zoned Agricultural Resource Land, 17.35A does not apply. The Lewis County Code chapter for ARL lands is 17.35 per Ordinance 1204.

The entire text for both LCC 17.35A and LCC 17.35 may be found online at <http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/lewiscounty/>